

**TOWN OF GILBERT  
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD STUDY SESSION  
90 E. CIVIC CENTER DRIVE, GILBERT, ARIZONA  
DECEMBER 12, 2013**

**BOARD PRESENT:**

Chairman Bob Deardorff  
Vice Chairman David Gibson  
Board Member Darrell Truitt  
Board Member Brian Johns  
Board Member Wahid Alam  
Board Member Benjamin Palmer  
Alternate Jason Watson

**BOARD ABSENT:**

Board Member Brian Andersen

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Planning Manager Linda Edwards  
Principal Planner Catherine Lorbeer  
Senior Planner Al Ward  
Senior Planner Maria Cadavid  
Planner Curtis Neal  
Planner Amy Temes  
Planner Nathan Williams

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Town Council Member Victor Peterson  
Recorder Margo Fry

**CALL TO ORDER STUDY SESSION:**

Chairman Bob Deardorff called the meeting to order at 4: 00 p.m.

**DR13-36: BOULDER CREEK MEETING HOUSE, LOCATED NORTH OF THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF RECKER AND WARNER ROADS AT BLOOMFIELD PARKWAY**

Senior planner Al Ward stated that DR13-36 was a new church on five acres in a Community Commercial (CC) district. A site plan was displayed. The site abuts the Rockefeller Group North Gateway Industrial and Business Park to the south and east of the site and the Liv Northgate 402 unit apartment complex to the north. Morrison Ranch is situated to the west across Recker Road. During the rezoning case for the property, the applicant agreed to provide an enlarged rear (east) landscape buffer and place the church building toward the west side of the lot, to help mitigate potential impacts with the industrial property to the east. The building is approximately 140 ft. from the rear (east) boundary of the site. Site access is provided from Recker Road only, to help avoid possible conflict with truck traffic accessing the future industrial park, which may use Bloomfield Parkway to the south. Planner Ward noted that there is no direct access to the site and as part of the zoning case the accesses were considered, making sure that there was no direct interaction between the site and potential heavy truck traffic. The meeting house is 19,422 ft.<sup>2</sup> of area. Planner Ward noted that the case would be brought back at the January meeting for consideration. He pointed out that this project is somewhat larger than the standard meeting houses and one of the major features is the large tile roof. The building is 3 tones of brick. The very prominent 31 ft. high pitched roof contains flat concrete tile with gray-brown color and extends downward to approximately 10 ft. above the ground along the north and south sides of the building. The roof along the east side of the building contains a hip and also

extends downward to about 10 ft. above grade. Prominent, lower 20 ft. high, gable roofs extend outward from the main roof at the 3 entrances at the north, south and east sides of the building. There is some banding which is a rough stucco finish. There are raised elements along the window areas.

Board member Truitt said that he would like to see colored elevations.

Planner Ward said that they would be sure to have those when they come back in January.

Chairman Deardorff said that in his opinion they could put it on consent.

**DR13-38: THE FALLS EVENT CENTER - SOUTHEAST CORNER OF QUINN AVENUE AND BASELINE ROAD**

Planner Nathan Williams displayed an aerial of the site plan and noted that the event center would be two separate buildings of 13,500 ft.<sup>2</sup> each and are very similar in design, floor plans and elevations. There is a left turn in from Baseline Road and the applicant is working on a traffic impact analysis and traffic/engineering is reviewing it currently. There is no left out from Baseline. An emergency only access is proposed onto Quinn and traffic/engineering would like to see it bumped down a bit so that there would be no one trying to turn in going left on Quinn. They would like to see it moved further down and used as an exit for customers.

Board Member Truitt asked if there would be a signal there.

Planner Williams said that there would be.

Planner Williams displayed the landscape plan and stated that there was a lot of perimeter landscaping and palm trees line the main drive. There is a focal point entry fountain and he noted that the landscape would include Bird of Paradise and Evergreens/shrubs. The elevations were displayed. The two (2) separate buildings proposed are not exact replicas of one another; however, they are very similar in articulation and design. The colors and materials of the buildings are the same, with the use of earth tones utilizing natural brick as the main building material on all four building elevations with fieldstone accents, flat tile roofing and aluminum and steel cantilevered entry features. The main access points to both buildings will be on the side (east/ west) elevations. Both buildings are 1-story in height, with clear story windows, giving the appearance of 2-story buildings. A rendering of the building was displayed and Planner Williams pointed out the two cantilevered features. He stated that staff was in support of the request.

Board Member Alam said that said that he liked the layout of the site with the two buildings. He noted that the water feature being so far from the entrances made it feel as though it was not for the individuals coming to the two buildings and that perhaps they should explore putting that water feature in the middle and creating an elliptical shape so that traffic would slow down and travel around the fountain. Board Member Alam said that the two sloped elements at the main access points seemed as though they were added later. They did not feel as though they were part of the building with the sloped tile roof. He said he thought that a shed roof would be more architecturally appropriate.

Planner Williams said that believed the water feature was placed where it was because that is the site where they will take pictures for weddings, etc. and they did not want it where there would be traffic.

Chairman Deardorff asked how they would be handling the gutters and downspouts.

Board Member Gibson said that typically they want internal drainage.

Board Member Johns commented that the South and North on the elevations do not seem to line up to the site plan.

Chairman Deardorff said that was because they were wrong.

Board Member Johns said that he was somewhat concerned about the window exposure with the Western sun coming in. Even on the South side there are a lot of windows and fenestration but no shade or shade canopies

whatsoever. That will make for a lot of heat coming into that building. He said that he also agreed with the other Board Member regarding the roof slope.

Board Member Gibson said that the 6 to 12 pitch did not work.

**Review DRB roles and responsibilities. Catherine Lorbeer, Principal Planner.**

Principal Planner Catherine Lorbeer stated that the Town Council has asked each of the Boards and Commissions to look at their roles and responsibilities. She noted that in Gilbert they are a service organization committed to enhancing quality of life and serving with integrity, trust and respect. The purpose of the current study session item was to examine the roles of the Design Review Board (DRB) with current Members. At the November 5, Town Council Study Session and overview of the Design Review Board was distributed to the Council and in the Boards packet there was an outline of the duties. Special projects were also noted and include their work with staff and stakeholders to create such things as the Standard Plan Transfer Policy, the Commercial Standard Notes and the Design Guidelines for Commercial, Industrial and Residential. Ms. Lorbeer pointed out that the DRB packet also contains Attachment C which characterizes how Chandler and Glendale handle Design Review. Both communities review site plans, architecture, landscaping, color and materials, lighting, signage etc. Design Review is conducted at the staff level and it appears as though their process takes somewhat longer than the Towns process. The Board Members also had Attachment D which calculates the number of cases reviewed from 2008 to 2013 and whether they were approved, continued or denied. During that period only one case was denied which involved the request to add bollards to the front entry of a grocery store.

Chairman Deardorff pointed out that there were a significant number of bollards that was restricting pedestrian access. It was not that the Board had an objection to the bollards, where appropriate.

Planner Lorbeer stated that the town recently received input from a local business advisory group known as the Small Business Alliance (SBA) and the SBA provided Attachment D in which they suggest changes to the Land Development Code (LDC) concerning Design Review. They include:

- More attention to safety infection.
- Less focus on color and aesthetics.
- Change to the board membership.
- Remove emphasis on energy efficiency, heat island effect, landscaping materials and residential standard plans.
- Increasing the size of additions that may be approved administratively.
- Remove the ability to deny a project.

Ms. Lorbeer commented that the Town is committed to open government and to involving the citizens in important decisions. The Design Review Board represents a group of involved citizens who review the built environment within a public setting and work to enhance the long-term quality and image of the community. Counsel has asked for the Design Review Boards input and their thoughts about the SBA's suggested edits and anything else that they would like to add concerning their responsibilities as a Design Review Board.

Board Member Johns commented that he objected to restricting their being more than one architect, one engineer, one landscaper etc. on the Board. He said that he felt that the Board was fortunate to have as many professional people in their fields such as architecture and engineering who wanted to be involved and who were willing to volunteer their time.

Board Member Truitt noted that they do not have a landscape architect or someone from the construction industry on the Board; however, they do not choose the applicants as that is the purview of the Town Council. Perhaps there should be more diligence given to the meeting of the candidates and the qualifications that are important to the Council. There are currently several architects on the Board but that is due to the Town Council's choice. He said that he liked it when they had Gary Petterson on the Board who was a landscape expert and when Jackie Cole, a real

estate agent, served on the Board and felt that it was valuable to have that mix. He said that he did not think that they needed a certified environmental design person on the Board as staff is able to obtain that kind of input. Board Member Truitt said that he believes Gilbert is one of the finest looking communities in the Valley. In terms of less focus on color and aesthetics, he said that he thinks that that is a primary mission of the Design Review Board. He said that he did not think that the Board is in the code compliance business and depends on the staff to make sure that the applications are within code for safety and function. In terms of the emphasis on energy efficiency, Board Member Truitt said that he did not believe they spent much time on that and that it is something that is popular that staff included in the Boards purview several years ago.

Chairman Deardorff commented that when they see a really serious problem with the orientation and a huge wall of glass they will say “hey, you might want to think about this.”

Board Member Truitt said those comments could be included in the site design. The Board doesn’t look at heat islands, energy efficiency, plumbing and mechanical and that type of thing. He said they are thinking that they are going beyond the bounds of what the intent of the Board was in the first place, he would agree with that in terms of energy efficiency, etc. Board Member Truitt said that in terms of increasing the size of additions that may be approved administratively, he was flexible on that and there was a time when they did not do any but he was sympathetic to the idea of making the process more efficient. He said that he believed that the mission of the Design Review Board was to help improve the appearance and quality of life in Gilbert and he trusted staff to do the same.

Chairman Deardorff commented that the proposal was to increase the size of additions to 10,000 feet which concerned him, somewhat. That is a fairly substantial addition.

Board Member Truitt said that it was substantial, however, it was in addition and they already have direction on approvals. He said that he did not think that they should remove from the Board the ability to deny a project and that they should always have the ability to approve, deny or continue. He pointed out that in staff’s presentation there was a graph that dictated that out of 365 projects there was only one denial. That is not something that happens over and over again. Board Member Truitt commented that he had been on the Board for 29 years and could count on one hand the denials upon hearing between 1000 – 2000 cases. He noted that the only times, in his recollection, that there were denials was when the applicant absolutely refuses to compromise. One of his stewardship’s while he was Chairman of the Board was to build consensus and get applicants through the process. Board Member Truitt stated a couple of cases where the applicant absolutely put their foot down and refused to compromise and appealed to Council. He said that everyone has the ability to appeal and is not like the Design Review Board has the final say.

Board Member Johns said that he believed that this was a time when citizens are concerned about more and more restrictions being applied to the code and being held back from future projects and yet what was being proposed was adding more restrictions to the requirements of the Design Review Board who have been brought on by the Council. The Council has been elected by the public in good faith that they would make good decisions. Board Member Johns said that a lot of the comments in the presentation were tying Council’s hands in who they decide to choose to sit on the Design Review Board.

Board Member Alam said that as a Gilbert resident’s reaction to the suggestions presented was that if he were a Town Council Member he would like to have the freedom to choose who would sit on the Boards and Commissions. He commented that things change so that instead of saying “shall include these people” perhaps it should say “may include these people” and give a guideline so that the Council can choose. Every two years when the opportunity comes, the Council could then say that maybe they need some other professionals that need to be on the team. Board Member Alam stated that he lives and was a resident in Gilbert and asked “where is my say”. He said that he chose to live in Gilbert when he came to the Valley for a job opportunity just by driving around the area. He and his family made the decision to live in Gilbert just because of the way it looked and yet the SBA is saying that the Design Review Board should focus less on color and aesthetics. He asked if a survey had been taken from the residents of Gilbert to see if they like what they see above ground compared to other places. He said he can vote for Gilbert because he had lived in other places. He pointed out that the quality of the buildings is not an automatic thing and noted that the McDonald’s in Sedona is very unique and that there is not another McDonald’s like that in the world. That does not

just happen and is not automatic. There is a lot of effort that goes into that, including Town staff, Design Review Board and residents as well as neighbors who occasionally come in to complain.

Chairman Truitt said that he believed it would be a mistake to limit the Board to just one architect because then you just have one person's opinion. He said that he would like to see someone who represented landscaping but they did not have to be a landscape architect.

Board Member Johns commented that they do have several architects on the Board; however, they are all in different architectural fields and have different expertise. He noted that he personally dealt with commercial and municipal while another worked for the city and others were involved in residential and hospital. He commented that they had a very good mix of experience that also included two civil engineers.

Chairman Deardorff said that one of the things that they don't want to have is people asking for things that cannot be accomplished or are onerous to accomplish. Those with the expertise and know-how know how buildings get put together and know when something is being asked for that is over the moon either in terms of expense or that it does not benefit the project or that it just can't be built. The expertise is valuable. Chairman Deardorff said there are communities where staff is the sole reviewer of the project which virtually puts the public outside the door. There is no public participation and the applicant is at the mercy of any staff member that he gets. He said that he had been in that position in the city of Glendale where the planner did not like his client and the project went down the tubes because there was no public participation or a diverse group of people looking at the project with different opinions and very little room for appeal. It was an unfortunate situation and the applicant and the project suffered for it. If you get the right staffer on the right day in a town where staff is the only one reviewing it you are in good shape. If they get up on the wrong side of the bed you're in trouble from the get-go. Public participation is very poor and you only get that when you have some type of hearing. The diversity of opinion and the ability to have that exchange between Board Members for the most part helps the applicant. You get a diverse range of opinions and you're not stuck with someone who is riding his favorite hobby horse of architecture or environmentalism or whatever it happens to be. Comparing Gilbert to other areas you can see that Gilbert is hands down a harmonious built environment and they have managed to level the playing field for applicants where if you get someone who comes in who wants to meet the vision of Gilbert and the vision of the subsequent Town Council and they want to rise to the occasion, you support them but you also support them by not letting someone come in who just wants to get by and slide so that down the street you have a building of much less quality that is much less appropriate in the community. Chairman Deardorff said that he did not think that led to a vanilla community and that he did not think that Gilbert was an extremely cohesive community point of boredom but have managed to learn how to have various projects come through that are diverse in architecture but still maintain the quality that everyone has come to expect from the Town.

Board Member Truitt said that it may be beneficial to have a sit down with the Design Review Board, the SBA and the Town Council.

Chairman Deardorff said that some of the suggested changes are fixing things that never happen such as the Board cannot meet in private or executive sessions and that all meetings should be open to the public.

Planning Manager Linda Edwards thanked the Design Review Board for their honest opinions and noted that they were well stated on all points. One of the next steps would be for the Council to review the comments at one of their study session. She commented that they would put it into Town Council Member Victor Petersons hands to present the evening's discussion to the Council at one of their study sessions. Miss Edwards said that she appreciated the volunteerism to work with the SBA as a follow-up and would let the Board know if that was their next step.

**Discuss any revisions to the agenda including but not limited to changes to conditions, changes to placement of items on the published agenda.**

Chairman Deardorff said that it had been proposed that they move item 8, DR13-30 from the consent agenda to the non-consent agenda.

ADJOURN STUDY SESSION:

Chairman Deardorff adjourned the Study Session at 5:00 p.m.

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Chairman Bob Deardorff

ATTEST:

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Recorder Margo Fry